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Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor.
Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the
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September, 1978

Number 1687

A "Great Fraud"? Politics in Thomas Ford's *History of Illinois*

Thirty years ago, historians thought Lincoln was most a statesman when he was least a man of party. In general, this meant that Lincoln the President was a statesman, but Lincoln the Whig politician was not. In the period from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, some historians celebrated the practical, compromising politician as the ideal statesman, and for this brief period Lincoln was often pictured as a statesman because he was a skilful politician. This new view never rebounded to the benefit of Lincoln's Whig years, though David Donald argued in 1959 that President Lincoln was merely a "Whig in the White House." The new appreciation for politicians did not extend to the Whig party, which was of little interest to liberal scholars who regarded its affection for banks and tariffs with disdain.

G.S. Boritt's *Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream* has at last rescued Lincoln's Whig years from the charge of narrow partisanship. But the reasons for the long reign of the view that Lincoln was a petty politician before the White House years have not been adequately explored.

One of the principal reasons is the heavy reliance historians have placed on Thomas Ford's *History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847* (Chicago: S.C. Griggs, 1854). It is an appealing book — a minor classic, in fact — written with economy, full of facts and descriptions nowhere else available, and brutally frank.

It is Ford's frankness which has had the greatest appeal. The tone of most nineteenth-century memoirs was pious and earnest rather than cynical, and nineteenth-century state histories were generally celebratory in nature. Ford's book, a state history written almost as a memoir by an active participant in much of the era he describes, is remarkable for its candor about

politics. Himself a politician (Ford was the Governor of Illinois from 1842 to 1846), he viewed the motives of most politicians with cynicism and spoke with the authoritative tone of an insider. Historians anxious for a reliable source which pierced through the customary platitudes and moralisms of nineteenth-century historical writing have devoured Ford's book.

For the early period of Lincoln's involvement with Illinois politics, Thomas Ford's *History of Illinois* is one of the most important sources. It is quoted by everyone. Even Lincoln quoted from it. In the first of his famous debates with Stephen Douglas, at Ottawa on August 21, 1858, Lincoln argued that his opponent had not always bowed to the will of the Supreme Court as readily as he bowed to its will as expressed in the Dred Scott decision.

And I remind him of another piece of history on the question of respect for judicial decisions, and it is a piece of Illinois history, belonging to a time when the large party to which Judge Douglas belonged, were displeased with a decision of the Supreme Court of Illinois, because they had decided that a Governor could not remove a Secretary of State. You will find the whole story in Ford's *History of Illinois*, and I know that Judge Douglas will not deny that he was then in favor of overhauling that decision by the mode of adding five new Judges, so as to vote down the four old ones. Not only so, but it ended in the *Judge's sitting down on that very bench as one of the five new Judges to break down the four old ones.*

Again, when Lincoln met Douglas at Charleston on September 18th, a heckler asked Lincoln, who was defending Lyman Trumbull's reputation, what Ford's book said about him. Lincoln re-

HISTORY OF ILLINOIS.

FROM ITS

COMMENCEMENT AS A STATE IN 1818 TO 1847.

CONTAINING A

FULL ACCOUNT OF THE BLACK HAWK WAR, THE RISE, PROGRESS,
AND FALL OF MORMONISM, THE ALTON AND LOVEJOY RIOTS,
AND OTHER IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING EVENTS.

BY THE LATE

GOV. THOMAS FORD.

CHICAGO :

PUBLISHED BY S. C. GRIGGS & CO.,

111 LAKE STREET.

NEW YORK: IVISON & PHINNEY.

1854.

From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 1. Title page of Ford's *History of Illinois*.

plied: "My own recollection is, that Ford speaks of Trumbull in very disrespectful terms in several portions of his book, and that he talks a great deal worse of Judge Douglas."

Ford's *History of Illinois* has played an important role in documenting Lincoln's career. It is one of the principal sources for the charge that, as a member of Sangamon County's "Long Nine," Lincoln had traded support for local internal improvements for votes to move the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield. The book barely mentions Lincoln, however, and its real importance has lain in providing a picture of the political landscape of Lincoln's early career.

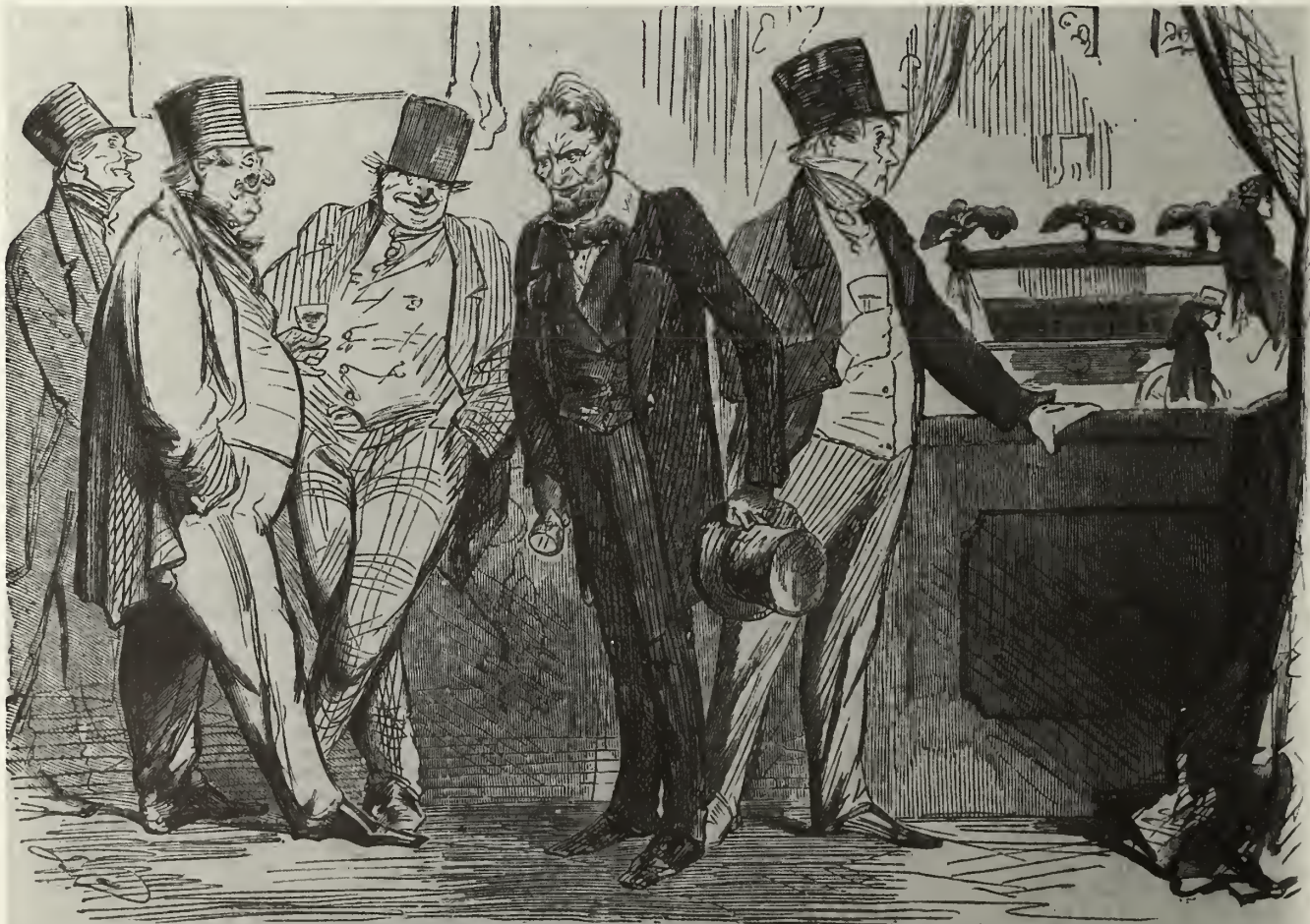
A good example of the book's use appears in the first volume of J.G. Randall's *Lincoln the President*:

The politicians' world in Illinois in the day of Lincoln's earlier career has been drawn from life in the vivid pages of Governor Thomas Ford. It was not an inspiring picture. Because of the want of true "issues" and the scramble for favor, as explained by Ford, an election became "one great fraud, in which honor, faith, and truth were . . . sacrificed, and politicians were debased below the . . . popular idea of that class of men." Government might mean one thing to the people; its purpose in the minds of politicians was another matter. They had a "destiny to accomplish, not for the people, but for themselves." With the people caring little for matters of government, said Ford, the "politicians took advantage of this lethargic state of indifference . . . to advance their own projects, to get offices and special favors from the legislature, which were all they busied their heads about." Politicians, he said, operated on the principle that "the people never blame any one for misleading them"; it

was merely a matter of supporting or opposing measures because of their popularity or unpopularity at the time. A "public man," said the governor, "will scarcely ever be forgiven for being right when the people are wrong." That was why "so many" politicians were "ready to prostitute their better judgments to catch the popular breeze." Whatever may have been the basis of parties in their early origin, Ford observed that "little big men, on both sides . . . feel the most thorough hatred for each other; their malice often supplying the place of principle and patriotism. They think they are devoted to a cause, when they only hate an opponent; and the more thoroughly they hate, the more . . . are they partisans." Party newspapers, he thought, promoted and perpetuated this unhealthy state of things.

Ford's candor about political motivation and his seeming nonpartisanship ("little big men" were "on both sides") persuaded many a student of Illinois history that politics were a sordid affair. Since Lincoln's life was thoroughly and inextricably enmeshed with Illinois politics, the result was that historians found in him, perhaps in less exaggerated form, the general attributes of Illinois politicians outlined by Thomas Ford.

The bitterness of Ford's disgust for politics and politicians was extraordinary and was not misrepresented by Randall and other Lincoln biographers who saw Lincoln's early political career as narrowly partisan and crafty. Ford introduces his theme in his discussion of the first Illinois legislature early in the book. "It appears," he said, "by the journals of this first legislature that a committee was appointed to contract for stationery, who reported that they had purchased a



OUR PRESIDENTIAL MERRYMAN.

The Presidential party was engaged in a lively exchange of wit and humor. The President Elect was the merriest among the merry, kept those around him in a continual roar."—*Daily Paper*.

From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 2. *Harper's Weekly* pictured Lincoln swapping stories with drinking politicians, as a hearse carrying the Union and the Constitution passed by.



FIGURE 3. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* pictured the crowd of office-seekers who besieged Lincoln when his administration began.

From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

sufficient stock at the cost of \$13[.50]. For every dollar then paid, we now pay hundreds for the same articles; but this was in the days of real frugality and economy, and before any of the members had learned the gentlemanly art of laying in, from the public stock, a year or two's supply at home." Surveying the state's political history up to 1830, and "calling to mind the prominent actors in the scenes of that day, the fierce struggles and quarrels amongst them, the loves and the hatreds, the hopes, fears, successes and disappointments of men, recently, but now no more on the stage of action, one cannot but be struck with with the utter nothingness of mere contests for office." The old and corrupt methods of politics were carried into the new state. "In those days," Ford said, "the people drank vast quantities of whiskey and other liquors; and the dispensation of liquors, or 'treating,' as it was called, by candidates for office, was an indispensable element of success at elections." The personal politics, intrigue, and disregard of the public welfare practiced in gaining election "were carried . . . into the legislature. Almost everything there was done from personal motives." Ford's message was simple: "Hitherto in Illinois the race of politicians has been more numerous and more popular with the people, than the race of statesmen."

Though Ford's views are exceptional for their disdain for the methods of politics, they have the ring of authenticity because of their lack of partisan flavor. Denunciations of politics and politicians in the nineteenth century were common, but they came most often as denunciations of the practices and practitioners of the opposite party. Ford spared almost no one; Democrat and Whig alike fell before his critical scythe.

Though nonpartisan in his criticism of politicians, Ford was nevertheless far from objective. His *History of Illinois* is colored by a prejudice not against any particular party but against parties themselves — or rather, against politics with or without parties. An especially revealing but little-known article on Ford's *History* in "The Illinois Bookshelf" column in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* for March, 1945, explains the reasons for Ford's peculiarly jaundiced views of the ways of politicians. Despite being an elected official himself, Ford's political success was achieved with a minimum of political effort. In 1835 the state legislature elected him circuit judge. In 1837 he became judge of the Chicago municipal court. In 1839 the legislature elected him circuit judge again, and in 1841 he joined the Illinois Supreme Court. In 1842 the Democratic candidate for governor died, and Ford replaced him with only ten weeks remaining before the election. Despite little time for campaigning, he won election in this overwhelmingly Democratic state. Thus, Ford

served as Illinois's governor without much campaigning and without ever having seen the state legislature at work. What he saw when he gained office must have shocked him. Another factor was Ford's long, painful, and losing battle against tuberculosis. He wrote his *History* in order to gain money for his five children, made indigent by his inability to make a living during his illness. The *History* embodies the bitter observations of a dying man. Ford died in 1850, leaving his manuscript with James Shields, who finally found a publisher for it in 1854.

Despite Ford's shock and disdain for politics, when he wrote his *History*, he could think of no better system than the one he had experienced. In fact, one could legitimately read Ford's book as a sober defense of the two-party system and an attack on the sophistication of the electorate. Throughout his *History*, Ford insisted "that, as a general thing, the government will be a type of the people." Whenever he denounced politicians and politics, he qualified his criticism by laying the ultimate blame on the ignorance or indifference of the people who elected them.

Likewise, when he criticized the political system, he often noted that the alternatives to it were far inferior. Discussing the period in Illinois before the emergence of two-party politics, Ford said:

There are those who are apt to believe that this mode of conducting elections [by personal rather than party contests] is likely to result in the choice of the best materials for administering government. . . . The idea of electing men for their merit has an attractive charm in it to generous minds; but in our history it has been as full of delusion as it has been attractive. Nor has the organization of regular parties, and the introduction of the new principle in elections of "measures not men," fully answered the expectation of its friends. But if the introduction of such parties, supposed to be founded on a difference in principles, has done no other good, it has greatly softened and abated the personal rancor and asperity of political contests, though it has made such contests increasing and eternal. It is to be regretted, however, if there be evils attending the contests of party, that society cannot receive the full benefit from them by the total extinction of all mere personal considerations, personal quarrels, and personal crimination, not necessary to exhibit the genius and tendency of a party as to measures, and which are merely incidental to contests for office. The present doctrine of parties is measures, not men, which if truly carried out would lead to a discussion of measures only. But parties are not yet sufficiently organized for this; and, accordingly, we find at every election much personal bitterness and invective mingled with the supposed contests for

principle. . . . Perhaps the time may come when all these personal contests will be confined to the bosom of one party, in selecting the best candidates to carry out its principles. Ford could thus complain that parties were inadequately organized and denounce a party-less system, the dream of many an elitist critic of American politics.

Ford had no illusions about the workings of party politics; yet he recognized parties as, at worst, a necessary evil. He had a realistic view of party discipline:

The organization of men into political parties under the control of leaders as a means of government, necessarily destroys individuality of character and freedom of opinion. Government implies restraint, compulsion of either the body or mind, or both. The latest improvement to effect this restraint and compulsion is to use moral means, intellectual means operating on the mind instead of the old mode of using force, such as standing armies, fire, sword and the gibbet, to control the mere bodies of men. It is therefore a very common thing for men of all parties to make very great sacrifices of opinion, so as to bring themselves into conformity with the bulk of their party. And yet there is nothing more common than for the race of newspaper statesmen to denounce all such of the opposite party as yield their own opinions to the opinions of the majority, as truckling and servile. They may possibly be right in this. But undoubtedly such submission is often necessary to the existence of majorities, entertaining the same opinion. A little further experience may develop the fact, that when this means of securing majorities shall fail, the government will fall into anarchy.

Unlike many critics of politics and parties, Ford had no fear of majority will. His basic complaint was that majorities were poorly formed and represented, and that bipartisan measures frustrated any responsibility of politician or party to people. His criticism of the Internal Improvements Act of 1837, often pointed to as a glaring example of Lincoln's narrow Whig partisanship, was that it was advocated and passed as a bipartisan measure for the good of the whole state. "The vote in the legislature was not a party vote," said Ford, and

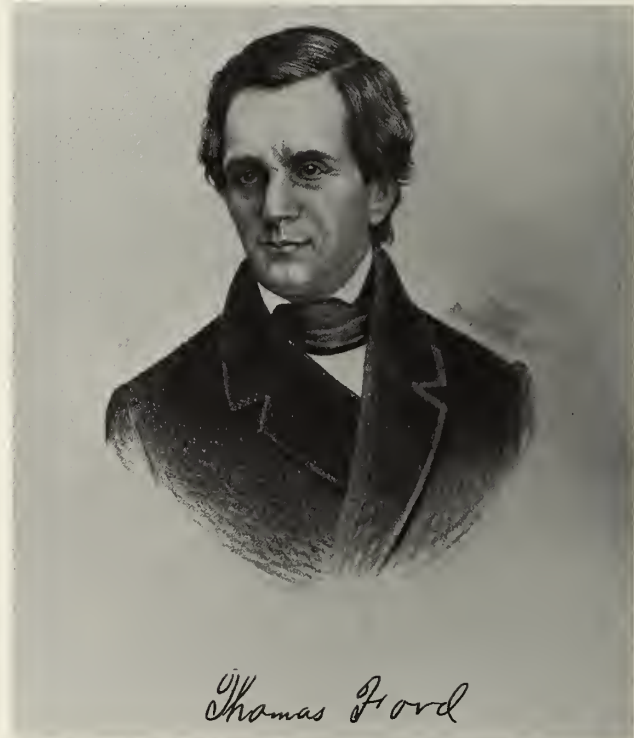
the banks were advocated and supported upon grounds of public utility and expediency; and like on the vote upon the internal improvement system, which followed at the next session, both whigs and democrats were earnestly invited to lay party feelings aside, and all go, at least once, for the good of the country. Whenever I have heard this cry since, I have always suspected that some great mischief was to be done, for which no party desired to be responsible to the people. As majorities have the power, so it is their duty to carry on the government. The majority, as long as parties are necessary in a free government, ought never to divide, and a portion of it join temporarily with the minority. It should always have the wisdom and courage to adopt all the measures necessary for good government. As a general thing, if the minority is anything more than a faction, if it has any principles, and is true to them, it will rally an opposition to all that is done by the majority; and even if it is convinced that the measures of the majority are right, it is safest for the minority to compel the majority to take the undivided responsibility of government. By this means there will always be a party to expose the faults and blunders of our rulers; and the majority will be more careful what they do.

Here Ford advocated the ultimate in the partisan ideal, the benefits of opposition to one party's program even when it seems to be a very proper program. This plea for disciplined, but responsible majorities looked forward to the proposals to institute in America cabinet government on the British model, proposals which were widely put forward towards the end of the nineteenth century.

As a theoretical commentator on the nature of party politics, Ford was unusual in his thoroughgoing defense of disciplined party majorities. In other respects, of course, he was a typical Democrat of his era. He thought that "no farmer ought ever to borrow money to carry on his farm." He blamed the internal improvements mania on "the general desire of sudden and unwarrantable gain; a dissatisfaction with the slow but sure profits of industry and lawful commerce, produced a general phrenzy." His ideal political system looked back to the storybook democracy of the early New England town:

My own opinion of the convention system is, that it can never be perfect in Illinois, without the organization of little township democracies, such as are found in New York and New England; that in a State where the people are highly intelligent, and not indifferent to public affairs, it will enable the people themselves to govern, by giving full effect to the will of the majority; but among a people who are either ignorant of or indifferent to the affairs of their government, the convention system is a most admirable contrivance to enable active leaders to govern without much responsibility to the people.

Thomas Ford's very good book has been used to very bad effect. Historians have used its strictures on the unsavory motives and methods of politicians to criticize political parties; yet Ford was himself a staunch defender of party politics. The book has been mined by historians but generally misread by them. Showing almost a tenderfoot's pique at the methods of state legislators, Ford has been seen as an unimpassioned and objective observer of party politics. The book should be used carefully by students of Lincoln's early political career, but it should be used. It deserves a better fate than historians have thus far allowed it.



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 4. Thomas Ford as pictured in the *Portrait and Biographical Album of Sangamon County, Illinois*.

Lincoln museum to profile Ottawa

By PAT HARRISON
City Editor

SEP 01 1995

Ottawa's connection to Abraham Lincoln will be included in a Fort Wayne, Ind., museum devoted to the 16th president.

The museum will open Oct. 1 and replace the Lincoln Museum operated since 1928 by the Lincoln National Life Insurance Co.

Steve Heiser, a film director for a group designing museum exhibits, was in Ottawa Monday filming photographs of the city in the 1850s and 1860s and a replica of a local newspaper's account of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858. The two were running for the U.S. Senate.

The Ottawa debate was selected because Lincoln used it to clarify his position on slavery and to capture the atmosphere of political debate at the time, museum historian Jerry Prokopowicz said.

At Ottawa, Lincoln reiterated a speech made in Peoria in 1854, when he declared slavery antithetical to democracy and opposed the extension of slavery to Kansas and Nebraska. But Lincoln also sought to show he was not an abolitionist — as Douglas charged — and did not consider the Negro a social equal of white people.

Lincoln hated the spread of slavery "because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world — enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites — causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty — criticising the Declaration of In-



We think this will be a great attraction for the whole Midwest. We have a great collection of documents and artifacts.'

Jerry Prokopowicz,
Lincoln Museum,
Ft. Wayne, Ind.

dependence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest."

Yet, Lincoln had doubts about freeing slaves and making them the political and social equal of the white man.

"Free them, and make them politically and socially, our equals? My own feelings will not admit of this."

Even if he believed in such equality for Negroes, Lincoln said, public opinion against it was insurmountable.

"A universal feeling, whether well or ill-founded, can not be safely disregarded. We can not, then, make them equals."

As Lincoln prepared to recite the speech, there was some give and take between him and the crowd as he prepared to put on his glasses.

Someone yelled, "Put on your specs."

"Yes, sir, I am obliged to do that. I am no longer a young man," Lincoln replied.

Another voice answered, "Too young to get into the Senate."

"It was a particularly good moment," Prokopowicz said. "There's a bit of play with the crowd in that speech; we want this exhibit to reflect the atmosphere of speaking out in that era. The audience gets involved, and there is a lot of back talk and heckling."

Excerpts from the Ottawa debate will be combined in one exhibit with segments from Lincoln's "House Divided" speech and his debate with Douglas at Alton to reflect his position on slavery.

A Civil War trilogy will feature Lincoln's relationship with his generals, the Emancipation Proclamation and events leading up to it and the experiences faced by Civil War soldiers.

Letters from a Fort Wayne soldier, Cpl. George Squiers, relate the "drudgery between battles and, in powerful language, the fear, smoke and noise during battle," Heiser said.

Squiers fought at Shiloh, Chickamauga and Stones River.

Another exhibit will focus on the history of early America and "how the taint of slavery leaves a foreboding in the hearts of the people," Heiser said.

The exhibit includes interpretations of how Lincoln as a young man was affected by slavery and the political and economic climate in the nation up to the time he becomes president, Heiser said.

Another exhibit studies Hollywood's view of Lincoln in "Abraham Lincoln," "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," "Young Mr. Lincoln" and a 1988 miniseries based on Gore Vidal's novel about Lincoln.

Movie critic Gene Siskel and a historian will debate the creative and educational merits of

SEE LINCOLN ON PAGE 3

■ LINCOLN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
SEP 01 1995

the films, Prokopowicz said.

The museum also will feature:

■ Readings and artifacts covering Lincoln's career.

■ A section for children to dress in clothing and play games of that era.

■ Computer games tied to that era.

■ Facsimiles of letters written to Lincoln, including the one from the young girl urging him to grow a beard.

■ A section where adults can vote on Lincoln's ideals.

Artifacts include Lincoln's penknife, a wallet for legal papers, items from his White House desk, a shawl he gave to one of his private secretaries, more than 100 documents he signed and the family photo album. Relics from the assassination include a piece of wallpaper from the box at Ford's Theatre and a bloodstained towel.

There will be 11 galleries, 18 computerized interactive exhibits,

four theaters, seven audiovisual presentations and a reference room for researchers.

"We think this will be a great attraction for the whole Midwest," Prokopowicz said. "We have a great collection of documents and artifacts, and we're combining them with modern technology for a landmark Lincoln exhibition."

"We think it will contribute to education and make the Lincoln story more accessible to a lot of people."

The opening of the museum will be preceded by a week of activities. All living presidents, except Ronald Reagan, who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, have been invited.

The Lincoln Museum was created by the Lincoln National Life Insurance Co. and houses the world's largest private collection of Lincoln memorabilia.

The new museum will be three times larger than the current one.

Lincoln National Life is a financial services organization based in Fort Wayne and, a company spokesman said, has assets of almost \$49 billion.

One of Illinois' most historically significant locations is Washington Square in Downtown Ottawa, site of the first Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858. Ottawa's Historic Preservation Commission has initiated a project that will forever commemorate the debate and one of our most important presidents, Abraham Lincoln.

Heroic-sized bronze statues of both Lincoln and Douglas are now in the process of creation. The City has retained sculptress Rebecca Childers-Caleel. Her works, although still in progress, have received rave reviews. For instance, Dr. Wayne Temple, Ph.D., Lincoln Scholar, stated, "with her God-given talent combined with her artistic training, Rebecca Childers-Caleel has succeeded beautifully where most others have failed to capture the true figure of Abraham Lincoln. Her statue of Lincoln is extremely lifelike and should be rated as one of the very best ever executed. In my opinion, it has few equals as to his face, etc. She has made the "bronze" come alive, and Lincoln speaks to us with mind and hand gestures. What a sculpture she has wrought!"

The statues will be erected in a plaza setting in the center of Washington Square. The plaza will include a reflecting pond, outlined in limestone. The design of the plaza will be both dignified and functional.

Once completed, the Washington Square Lincoln-Douglas Debate Memorial will attract people from all over the country. Teachers and parents will bring their children to see the statues and visit the nearby Ottawa Visitor's Center which will have interpretive displays regarding the lives and times of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, and the importance of the Lincoln-Douglas debates in our country's history.

This ambitious project will serve as a lasting testimonial to the Lincoln - Douglas Debate, which focused our national attention on the issue of slavery and set the stage for the ascendancy of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency. All of us will benefit greatly from its presence. You can help make this project a reality. Your contribution to the Lincoln-Douglas Memorial will ensure that future generations appreciate the importance of the debate and the Lincoln Legacy.



WWW.YEAROFLINCOLN.COM

For More Information
on how you can contribute to
The Lincoln-Douglas Debate Memorial
Contact

The City Of Ottawa
301 W. Madison St.
Ottawa, IL 61350

or

Year of Lincoln Management Company:
ADventure Advertising & Printing
Harold Clemens or Sally Rutledge-Ott
300 W. Joliet St., Ottawa, IL 61350
(815) 431-1000 fax (815) 431-1006
E-mail: hclem@adventure3.com

Ottawa Historic Preservation Commission

Ottawa Mayor Robert M. Eschbach
Chairperson, Patty Godfrey
Lupe O'Leary • Margaret Martyn
Joyce Lyons • Mike Weygand
Carl Herren • Keith Johnson

Commemorating LINCOLN



*Project description of the
Lincoln-Douglas Debate
Memorial to be erected in
Ottawa's Washington Square.*

Revised June 2002

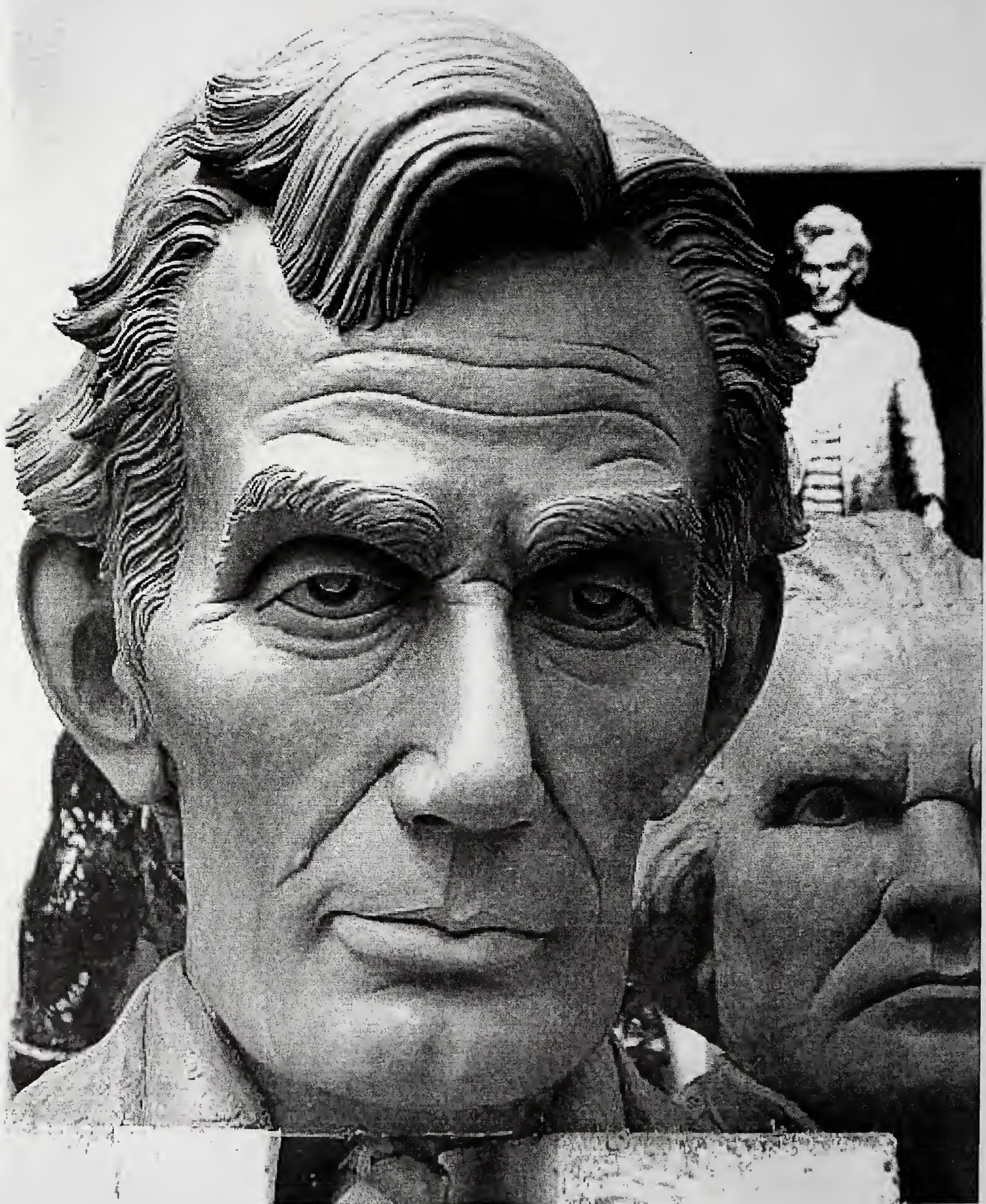
The Future Lincoln-Douglas Debate Memorial in Ottawa's Washington Square.



The statues were sculpted by Illinois artist, Rebecca Childers-Caleel. Lincoln Scholar, Dr. Wayne C. Temple, Ph.D., said of Caleel's work, "Every detail is so lifelike. You have produced a masterpiece. I have never seen a finer statue of Lincoln."

The statues are being cast by Art Casting of Illinois. This company is known for the outstanding quality of its work, and has cast world class bronzes such as the Michael Jordan statue at the United Center in Chicago, as well as the statue of Mao Tse Tung in Beijing.

Revd June 200



Abe's First Ottawa Visit: Boat club sundial marks the spot -- or does it?

11/15/2010, 5:20 am

[Comment on this story](#)

Charles Stanley, charless@mywebtimes.com, 815-431-4063

It looks like a well-worn yard decoration.

But the sundial outside the Ottawa Boat Club actually marks Abraham Lincoln's first known visit to Ottawa.

In 1832 Lincoln served as a volunteer during the Black Hawk War, with his first enlistment ending and his second enlistment starting in Ottawa.

In April, Lincoln, 23, then a resident of New Salem, joined a unit of volunteer militia. Despite having no military experience, he was elected captain and put in command of a rifle company.

By one account, Lincoln could not remember the proper military command to move his soldiers through a gate.

"So as we came near the gate I shouted: 'This company is dismissed for two minutes, when it will fall in again on the other side of the gate.' "

Lincoln and his men covered a lot of territory. They arrived in Ottawa on May 27 at the end of their enlistments. It was just days after the Indian Creek Massacre, where a band on American Indians killed or kidnapped a group of settlers living several miles north of Ottawa.

In Ottawa, Lincoln and his men were mustered out by Major Nathaniel Buckmaster, a former state legislator and sheriff of Madison County.

Two days later, Lincoln was sworn back in as a soldier along with 71 other former officers into a 20-day company commanded by Major Elijah



Photo: Charles Stanley

The sundial outside the Ottawa Boat Club was dedicated in 1918 to mark the spot where, in 1832, Abraham Lincoln was said to have been mustered out, then back into the state militia during the Black Hawk War.



Photo: Charles Stanley

Ron Slack, head of the Starved Rock Civil War Round Table, tries to make out the worn inscription about Abraham Lincoln's first visit to Ottawa in 1832 as a soldier in the Black Hawk War.

Iles, one of Springfield's founders.

Swearing Lincoln in was Lt. Robert Anderson. When the Civil War began in 1861, Anderson would be the commander of Ft. Sumter, S.C., where the first shots were fired.

The sundial was dedicated with a ceremony on Dec. 3, 1918, as part of the city's commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Illinois statehood.

The base of the sundial featured three lines of engraving saying the spot was where Lincoln had been mustered out and then back in as a soldier.

"Through the kindness and generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Griggs this marker has been provided so that future generations may know that on this spot once stood Abraham Lincoln performing his duty as a soldier and patriot," said Mayor E.F Bradford.

"This monument will be protected and preserved through the years to come so that succeeding generations may be reminded of the man, the place and the time," said Bradford

Whether the sundial marks the actual spot where Lincoln finished his first tour of duty and began his second is up for debate.

"It's one of those kind of murky things as far as exact history goes," said Ron Slack of Ottawa, the head of the Starved Rock Civil War Round Table.

Slack thinks the boat club may have been of a symbolic spot due to its convenient location.

Also, he points out, most accounts place Lincoln's second swearing-in as being south of the Illinois River at Fort Johnston, which sat on the bluff overlooking Ottawa.

The fort was named for Lt. Albert Johnson, who became a Confederate general during the Civil War and was mortally wounded at the Battle of Shiloh.

In 1932 a metal plaque to mark the fort's location was installed at 127 E. Prospect St., where it can still be seen.

The marker plaque has held up better than the sundial, which is chipped and missing its gnomon, the triangular blade needed to cast the sun's shadow onto the sundial's face.

The inscription at the base has worn away to the point of being unreadable.

Lincoln's entire career as a soldier lasted less than three months.

Lincoln never was in combat — at least not with Indians.

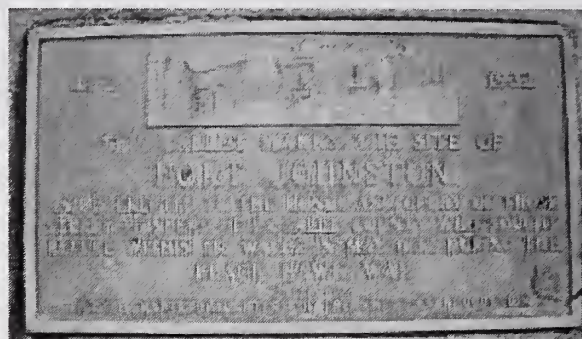


Photo: Charles Stanley

This ground-level plaque at the base of a flagpole at 127 E. Prospect Street in Ottawa marks the location of Fort Johnston during the Black Hawk War.



Photo: Charles Stanley

"I had a good many bloody struggles with the mosquitos," Lincoln later said.

Ottawa, Ill.



originals in file



originals
in file

Debate, Ottawa



Ill, Ottawa, Debate Marker



Debates Ottawa



originals in file

Debates, Ottawa



Debates, Ottawa





Sister Shawn
STRAWN

b. '55

{ Clarence (Grove)
Cultural Life Building
Lawyer.
Residence for trap
club members —

House where
Lincoln was entertained
after speech is still
standing. by crowd
Lincoln carried there
(870 Columbus St.
as you go).

1832

1922

This tablet marks the
Site of
Fort Johnston
and is erected to the
honor & glory of those
brave pioneers of La
Salle County who
sought refuge within
its walls in May, 1832.

During the Civil War

Placed by
Huron Chapter D.A.R.
of the La Salle Co.

